

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-22 were previously pending in the application. Claims 6, 8, and 12 are amended; and new claims 23-24 are added herein. Support for new claim 23 is found, for example, in previously pending claims 2-5, 7-11, and 21, and support for new claim 24 is found, for example, in previously pending claims 13-16, 18-20, and 22. Assuming the entry of this amendment, claims 1-24 are now pending in the application. The Applicant hereby requests further examination and reconsideration of the application in view of the foregoing amendments and these remarks.

The amendments to the claims were made to clarify the claimed subject matter. None of these amendments were made to overcome any prior-art rejections.

In paragraph 4 of the office action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7-16, and 18-22 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sarkar in view of Somayazulu. In paragraph 5, the Examiner objected to claims 6 and 17 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that those claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

The Applicant submits that the rejection of claims under Section 103(a) is improper because Somayazulu is not a proper prior-art reference. The present application claims priority from a corresponding European application filed on November 20, 2000. Somayazulu was filed on December 29, 2000. As such, Somayazulu is not a proper prior-art reference, and the rejection of claims under Section 103(a) based on a combination of Sarkar and Somayazulu is improper. As such, the Applicant submits that the rejection of claims under Section 103(a) has been overcome.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, the Applicant believes that the now-pending claims are in condition for allowance. Therefore, the Applicant believes that the entire application is now in condition for allowance, and early and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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